

Craig Waste Oil Spill
Church Street
Blocksburg, CA

Notice of Proposed No Further Action related to petroleum and waste discharges.
Comment period ends **April 24, 2003**

Problem description:

On May 30, 2000, this office received a letter from the Humboldt County Division Of Environmental Health (HCDEH) that reported a discharge of diesel at two indoor marijuana grow operations near the community of Blocksburg. During a narcotics raid by the Humboldt County Sheriff's Department and the Drug Enforcement Agency on May 18, 2000, the diesel contamination was discovered. Subsequently a hazardous materials spill report was filed to the State Office of Emergency Services. HCDEH responded to the spill on May 19, 2000, and noticed obvious contamination at both grow locations. Laboratory analysis of soil samples collected by HCDEH resulted in the detection of TPH-motor oil at 14,000 parts per million (ppm) and TPH-diesel at 30,000 ppm. RWQCB staff followed up with a site inspection on June 12, 2000. Areas of concern identified by staff included an oil stained area caused by the discharge of used motor oil from a diesel powered generator, diesel contamination in the area of a former aboveground storage tank, two burn piles, and vegetation die-off at soil stained areas leading away from the grow barn. Staff also collected water samples from one of two nearby creeks for analysis of TPH diesel and motor oil, neither product was detected above the minimum detection limit of 50 and 170 ppb respectively.

Interim Actions Completed:

On August 5, 2002, SHN Consulting implemented the workplan for investigation and interim cleanup of the site. This consisted of four excavations, four test pits, a temporary well point and four hand-augered soil borings. Soil samples were collected at all locations. No groundwater was encountered during the investigation, and the creeks were dry at the time of investigation, therefore no water samples were collected.

The cleanup of contaminated areas was accomplished through excavation and disposal. Soil samples were collected within each excavation at the side-walls and floor. Analytical results of samples from separate excavations indicated residual contamination of TPH motor oil at 15 ppm and phenanthrene at 0.094 ppm. No other contaminants were identified in soil left in place. Soil excavated from contaminated areas was stockpiled and characterized. Analysis of samples from the soil stockpile detected concentrations of TPH-motor oil up to 440 ppm and TPH diesel up to 20 ppm. The soil stockpile was disposed of at the Keller Canyon Landfill in Pittsburg, California. All excavation pits were filled with clean soil.

The test pit excavations were excavated to approximately seven feet deep and soil samples were collected at about one foot and four feet below ground surface (bgs). No obvious contamination was observed at these locations. One sample had results detecting contamination, which was TPH in the gasoline range detected at 1.1 ppm. All other samples were below detection limits.

The installation of the temporary well point was conducted through the floor of a test pit. The well point was driven to 10 feet bgs, where refusal occurred. In an attempt to obtain a groundwater sample, the well point was left in place for two hours. No groundwater accumulated in the well point and it was dry upon removal. Collection of a water sample was unattainable.

Four hand-auger borings installed at the site were advanced 4.5 feet bgs and two samples were collected from each boring. With the exception of TPH-diesel at 2.6 ppm in boring B-4, no contamination was identified in the soil borings.

Analysis of all soil samples for metal concentrations was also conducted, including samples from background locations. Results from one soil sample were elevated in comparison to background levels, specifically chromium at 550 ppm and nickel at 1,000 ppm. These results deviated from the background mean of 102 ppm for chromium and 93 ppm for nickel. Since these results were obtained below the location of another sample with results that approached background levels, the elevated metal concentrations are determined to be the result of a naturally occurring anomaly, not the result of site activities. All other soil samples analyzed for metals were comparable to the background sample concentrations.

Sensitive Receptors

Two seasonal creeks are located adjacent to the impacted area. During a Regional Board staff inspection in June 2000, water samples were collected from one of the creeks. Results of those samples did not identify an impact to the surface water at that time. During cleanup and investigation by SHN in August 2002, samples were not obtained since the creeks were dry. Groundwater was determined to not exist to a depth of at least 11 feet bgs, the greatest depth of exploration.

Proposed Action:

Site is proposed for no further action. Basis for this consideration is the threat posed by the discharge to soil has been minimized through cleanup measures and there are no indications of adverse impacts to water quality.

MtBE Status: MtBE was not detected in soil samples. Minimum detection limit was 0.025 ppm.

Unless comments are received or new information is presented, Regional Water Board staff plan to concur with no further action upon conclusion of the comment period. Please contact Cody Walker by telephone at (707) 576-2642 or e-mail at walkc@rb1.swrcb.ca.gov for all issues concerning the Craig Waste Oil Spill site.